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Agenda item 27

Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2008, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-third session the item entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item and held a general debate on it at its 10th meeting, on 16 October 2008 and took action on the item at its 22nd meeting, on 5 November (see A/C.4/63/SR.10 and 22).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation;[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the financial and administrative implications of increased membership of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, staffing of the professional secretariat of the Scientific Committee and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding (A/63/478).

4. At the 10th meeting, on 16 October, the representative of Canada, in her capacity as Chairperson of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, made a statement (see A/C.4/63/SR.10).

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/63/46).

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5. At the same meeting, the Secretary of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation made a presentation.

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.9

6. At the 22nd meeting, on 5 November, the representative of Canada, on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, China, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Guatemala, Japan, Lithuania, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand and Ukraine, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" (A/C.4/63/L.9). Subsequently, Armenia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Monaco and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

7. At the same meeting, the Secretary of the Committee informed the Fourth Committee that there were no programme budget implications relating to the draft resolution.

8. At its 22nd meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.9 without a vote (see para. 9).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

9. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Effects of atomic radiation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955, by which it established the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and its subsequent resolutions on the subject, including resolution 62/100 of 17 December 2007, in which, inter alia, it requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work,

Taking note with appreciation of the work of the Scientific Committee, and of the release of its report on its fifty-sixth session,[1]

Reaffirming the desirability of the Scientific Committee continuing its work,

Concerned about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which mankind and the environment are exposed,

Conscious of the continuing need to examine and compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on mankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increased volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Noting the views expressed by Member States at its sixty-third session with regard to the work of the Scientific Committee,

Recalling the deep concern of the Scientific Committee expressed in the report on its fifty-sixth session that reliance on a single post at the Professional level in its secretariat had left the Committee seriously vulnerable and had hampered the efficient implementation of its approved programme of work,[2] and noting that a solution to this concern has not yet been achieved,

Recalling also its request at its sixty-second session that the Secretary-General provide a comprehensive and consolidated report, to be prepared in consultation with the Scientific Committee as appropriate, addressing the financial and administrative implications of increased Committee membership, staffing of the professional secretariat and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding,

1. *Commends* the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation for the valuable contribution it has been making in the course of the past fifty-three years, since its inception, to wider knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation, and for fulfilling its original mandate with scientific authority and independence of judgement;

2. *Reaffirms* the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee;

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/63/46).

[2] Ibid., para. 11.

3. *Takes note with appreciation* of the work of the Scientific Committee and of the release of its extensive report to the General Assembly,[1] with scientific annexes, which provide the scientific and world community with the Committee's latest evaluations;

4. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources;

5. *Endorses* the future programme of work of scientific review and assessment of the Scientific Committee on behalf of the General Assembly on assessments of levels of radiation from energy production and the effects on human health and the environment, uncertainty in radiation risk estimation, attributability of health effects due to radiation exposure, updating its methodology for estimating exposures due to discharges from nuclear installations, a summary of radiation effects and improving data collection, analysis and dissemination, notes with concern that the Committee cannot initiate work immediately on topics which make up half of the entire programme due to the lack of resources within the professional secretariat, and endorses the longer-term strategic plan of the Committee for its work, as reported to the Assembly at its sixty-third session;

6. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue at its next session the review of the important questions in the field of ionizing radiation and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session;

7. *Emphasizes* the need for the Scientific Committee to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report can reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States;

8. *Expresses its appreciation* for the assistance rendered to the Scientific Committee by Member States, the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and non-governmental organizations, and invites them to increase their cooperation in this field;

9. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing its future scientific reports, and requests the Secretariat to facilitate such consultations;

10. *Welcomes*, in this context, the readiness of Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with relevant information on the effects of ionizing radiation in affected areas, and invites the Committee to analyse and give due consideration to such information, particularly in the light of its own findings;

11. *Invites* Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations concerned to provide further relevant data about doses, effects and risks from various sources of radiation, which would greatly help in the preparation of future reports of the Scientific Committee to the General Assembly;

12. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue providing support for the effective conduct of the work of the Scientific Committee and for the dissemination of its findings to the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public;

13. *Urges* the United Nations Environment Programme to review and strengthen the present funding of the Scientific Committee, pursuant to paragraph 14 of resolution 62/100, and to continue to seek out and consider temporary funding mechanisms to complement existing ones, and, in that context, takes note of the establishment by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme of a general trust fund to receive and manage voluntary contributions to support the work of the Committee, and encourages Member States to consider making voluntary contributions to the trust fund;

14. *Takes note* of the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General,[3] prepared in consultation with the Scientific Committee as appropriate, on the financial and administrative implications of increased membership of the Committee, staffing of its professional secretariat and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding;

15. *Recognizes* the conclusion, outlined in paragraph 48 of the report of the Secretary-General, on the need for strengthened human resources for the professional, scientific secretariat in order to support the Scientific Committee in a more predictable and sustainable manner with a longer-term perspective, to effectively facilitate the use of the invaluable expertise offered to the Committee by its members, and to enable the Committee to discharge the responsibilities and mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, and emphasizes in this context that these resources are needed in any case and before Member States can agree to a change in Committee membership;

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in formulating his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, to consider all options, including the possibility of internal reallocation, to provide the Scientific Committee with the resources outlined in paragraphs 48 and 50 of the report of the Secretary-General;

17. *Directs* the Scientific Committee to continue its reflection on how the current, as well as a potentially revised, membership for the Scientific Committee could best support the essential work of the Committee, including by developing detailed, objective and transparent criteria to be applied equitably to present and future members alike, and to report on these efforts before the end of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly;

18. *Welcomes* the attendance of Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine as observers at the fifty-sixth session of the Scientific Committee, invites each of those States to designate one scientist to attend, as observers, the fifty-seventh session of the Committee, and resolves to take a decision on full membership for these countries once a decision on resource allocation has been made, pursuant to paragraph 16 above, but no later than the end of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

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[3] A/63/478.